

What is claimed is:

1. A method of monitoring a communications session between an agent of a contact centre and a user of said contact centre comprising the steps of:
 - a) receiving data from said communications session,
 - b) analysing said data to locate a pattern of data indicative of a situation arising in the communications session for which an alert has been prescribed, and
 - c) on recognising said pattern of data, issuing an alert to a system of the contact centre.
2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said alert is effective to notify a human supervisor or an automated system to effect an intervention in said communications session.
3. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said alert is effective to provide said agent with information which is available to a system of the contact centre and which appears relevant to the data exchanged in the communications session.
4. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said communications session is a real-time communications session and said step of analysing said data is performed in real time as the communications session progresses, whereby said alert can issue in real time to affect the communications session in the event of said pattern being detected.

5. A method as claimed in claim 4, wherein said communications session is one of a voice telephony call, a video call, an internet chat session or an instant messaging session.
- 5 6. A method as claimed in claim 5 wherein said communications session is a voice call or a video call which includes speech data, and said step of analysing data comprises recognising words or phrases in speech data and comparing said recognised words or phrases 10 with one or more stored lists, whereby said pattern is a match between a spoken word or phrase and an entry in said one or more stored lists.
7. A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein said communications session is a voice call or a video call 15 which includes speech data, and said step of analysing data comprises recognising that one or both parties is speaking in a raised voice.
8. A method as claimed in claim 7, wherein said 20 step of analysing data comprises determining a normal volume level for the speech of one or both parties and extrapolating a volume threshold above which a party is deemed to be speaking in a raised voice.
9. A method as claimed in claim 4, wherein said 25 step of analysing data comprises detecting a period of silence on the part of the agent and/or the user and said pattern is a period of silence of greater than a threshold duration.

10. A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein said communications session is an internet chat session or an instant messaging session, and said step of analysing data comprises recognising words or phrases 5 in textual data and comparing said recognised words or phrases with one or more stored lists, whereby said pattern is a match between a recognised word or phrase and an entry in said one or more stored lists.

11. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said 10 step of receiving data from said communications session comprises initiating a conference between the user and the agent and an automated data analysis system which receives communications session data from one or both of the user and agent.

15 12. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of issuing an alert comprises issuing an alert to a supervisor workstation system of the contact centre effective to cause a supervisor at a workstation to be provided with an audible or visible alert.

20 13. A method as claimed in claim 11, wherein said audible or visible alert includes a visible flag to be provided against said communications session on a display of the workstation which provides details of communications session under the supervision of said 25 supervisor.

14. A method as claimed in claim 11, wherein said visible flag is selected from a series of flags each indicating a different condition.

15. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of issuing an alert comprises issuing an alert to a contact centre management system effective to cause said contact centre management system to remove said 5 agent from said communications session.

16. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of issuing an alert comprises issuing an alert to a contact centre management system, effective to cause said contact centre management system to conference in 10 a human supervisor to said communications session.

17. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of issuing an alert comprises issuing an alert to a contact centre management system, effective to cause said contact centre management system to record the 15 communications session.

18. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of analysing said data includes calculating a probability that a pattern match has been accurately detected.

20 19. A computer program product comprising instructions in machine readable form which, when executed on a computer which is in receipt of data from a communications session between an agent of a contact centre and a user of said contact centre, are effective 25 to cause the computer to:

a) analyse said data to locate a pattern of data indicative of a situation arising in the

communications session for which an alert has been prescribed, and

- b) on recognising said pattern of data, issue an alert to a system of the contact centre.

5 20. A communications session monitoring system for monitoring a communications session between an agent of a contact centre and a user of said contact centre, the system comprising:

- a) an input for receiving data from said communications session,
- b) a data pattern store for storing one or more patterns of data indicative of a situation arising in the communications session for which an alert has been prescribed,
- c) an data analysis engine for analysing said data to locate at least one of said one or more patterns of data, and
- d) an alert generator for issuing an alert to a system of the contact centre.

20 21. A contact centre comprising a communications session manager for managing a communications session between an agent of a contact centre and a user of said contact centre, and a system for monitoring said communications session, the monitoring system comprising:

- a) an input for receiving data from said communications session,

- b) a data pattern store for storing one or more patterns of data indicative of a situation arising in the communications session for which an alert has been prescribed,

5 c) an data analysis engine for analysing said data to locate at least one of said one or more patterns of data, and

 d) an alert generator for issuing an alert to the contact centre management system.

10 22. A contact centre as claimed in claim 19, wherein said intervention comprises adding to the communications session a supervisor of the contact centre.

 23. A method of supervising one or more agents in a contact centre comprising the steps of:

15 a) upon one of said agents entering into a communications session with a user of the contact centre, providing data from said communications session to an automated data analysis unit;

20 b) analysing said data automatically to detect data elements indicative of a situation requiring supervisor intervention; and

 c) on detection of said data elements, alerting a supervisor of the situation indicated by said data elements.

25